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Rare Books of Scottish Provenance: Los Angeles County Law Library Sale

Posted on [28/04/2014](#) by [John Cairns](#)

On 5 March 2014, Bonham's in London auctioned some rare books, the property of the Los Angeles Law Library. A number of these had a Scottish association or provenance that illuminates aspects of Scottish Legal History.

The first worth noting, no. 111 in the Catalogue, is a copy of Barnabé Brisson, *De verborum quae ad jus pertinent significatione libri XIX* apparently once owned by Sir Robert Spottiswoode, and with marginal notes in his hand. Spottiswoode is remembered by Scots lawyers for his own *Practicks*, published in a printed version by his grandson in 1706; your blogger is lucky enough to own the grandson's own copy: <http://www.elhblog.law.ed.ac.uk/2013/05/22/spottiswoodes-practicks/> The Brissonius is an important humanistic work, perhaps reflecting Spottiswoode's education in France, but certainly indicating the interest of Scots lawyers of his generation.

Next one may notice no. 147, a very early edition of Grotius' *De jure belli ac pacis libri III*, that of Amsterdam 1631. There is no need to emphasise the importance of Grotius' work. But we know that Scots lawyers when studying in the Netherlands, which they often did between around 1680-1740, often took a *Collegium Grotianum*, that is a class on the law of nature and nations based on Grotius's book. The volume has an *ex libris* inscription of 1702 on its title page, marking its purchase in Leiden by William Mure in 1702. He obviously purchased it when a student at the University there, before admission to the Faculty of Advocates in 1707. It long remained in the library of the Mure of Caldwell family, who produced many lawyers in the eighteenth century. On Grotius, see also <http://www.elhblog.law.ed.ac.uk/2012/10/01/anton-schultingh-1659-1734/>

Finally one may note *Acts of Assembly. Passed in the Island of Jamaica; from 1770, to 1783, Inclusive* (Kingston 1786). It has a Grant family book plate, and an inscription "J. Grant's May 6 1789". Further work would be required, but it is tempting to identify this "J. Grant" as the Scotsman John Grant, Chief Justice of Jamaica (1783-1790), but one would need to be able to make a comparison to be sure. But if so, it connects with Scottish colonialism and slave-owning: see <http://www.elhblog.law.ed.ac.uk/2010/11/17/scottish-chief-justice-of-jamaica-18th-century-and-his-court-reports/>

There are other tempting connections: one book has a provenance: Craigie Hall Library, presumably Craigie Hall on the outskirts of Edinburgh. It is a copy of M. Salamoni, *Responsa prudentum, paradoxa*, Basel 1530 – a plausible work for a Scottish library. There are other suggestively Scottish names.

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